

A Fulfilled Christian Life, Part 11 - Romans 12:14-15 – February 17th, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part eleven of a series titled; "A Fulfilled Christian Life."
- The remainder of this chapter, specifically from verses twelve through twenty-one, the Apostle Paul lists numerous paradoxes for our lives.
- By that I mean, the common denominator in everything Paul lists is, they're seemingly contradictory, in that they go against human nature.

1. Joyful in Hope (Verse 12a)

- We see this with the first one in the first part of verse twelve such that instead of being joyful in hope, I tend to hang on by a thread to hope.

2. Persevering in Affliction (Verse 12b)

- It doesn't get any better in the second part of verse twelve because my natural tendency in affliction isn't to persevere rather it's to give up.

3. Persistent in Prayer (Verse 12c)

- Then the third part of the verse is the most guilt producing by virtue of how persistence in prayer really goes contrary to my human nature.

4. Giving in Hospitality (Verse 13)

- Then verse thirteen doesn't help when I'm told that a fulfilled Christian is giving and hospitable, when all I can think about are my needs.

5. Blessing in Persecution (Verse 14)

(14) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

- Paul says that we can actually bless those who persecute us instead of doing what comes naturally, which is to curse those who curse us.

- Now let me hasten to say that if we see this list as a "to-do list," then it will only be a matter of time before we give up trying in frustration.

- I would suggest that instead of seeing this as a "to-do list," we would do well to see it as a "can-be list," or even a "can-have list," if you will.

- Let me explain, God doesn't give us His Word only to send us out on our own to do our best as if to say, "here's the to-do list, now go do it!"

- In other words, God's command and calling come packaged with God's enabling, in the sense that we can be and have what He gives us.

- Perhaps better said, I can be everything that's listed here in His Word, if I'll but believe Him at His Word. After all, He's given me His Word.

- If I find myself the recipient of unfair and unjust persecution, then I can bless them, instead of doing what comes easy for my sin nature.

- The scriptures are replete with one example after another of blessing instead of cursing and what came as a result of their not cursing.

- Moses with his brother and sister after gossiping about him Joseph with his brothers who betrayed him David with Saul who tried to kill him.

- Can you imagine what would've become of their lives had they cursed instead of blessed? Surely we wouldn't be reading about their lives.

- I'll take it a step further and submit that the same thing holds true for our lives as well, in that blessing in persecution will bless our lives.

- Again, this is not some "pie in the sky," this can be real in our lives, in spite of the fact that it goes against the very sin nature of our lives.

6. Rejoicing in Rejoicing (Verse 15)

(15) Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

- Paul writes what is arguably deemed a firm grasp of the obvious saying, "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

- However, the problem is, I find it easier in my human nature to mourn with those who mourn than I do to rejoice with those who rejoice.

- The reason that rejoicing with those who rejoice goes contrary to my flesh is that I'm covetous of that which they are rejoicing about.

- And, the reason I'm covetous of that which they are rejoicing about, is because I myself, thinking only of myself, don't have what they have.

- So, instead of me rejoicing with those who rejoice, I will mourn over those who rejoice, and I may even rejoice over those who mourn.

- The reason I may actually rejoice over those who mourn is that they lost something that I was jealous of them having in the first place.

A couple of weeks ago, on Tuesday, January 22nd, Reuters News published a most interesting article titled; "Is Facebook envy making you miserable? Here are a couple of excerpts; "Witnessing friends' vacations, love lives and work successes on Facebook can cause envy and trigger feelings of misery and loneliness, according to German researchers. ...The researchers found that one in three people felt worse after visiting the site and more dissatisfied with their lives, ... 'We were surprised by how many people have a negative experience from Facebook with envy leaving them feeling lonely, frustrated or angry,' researchers ...told Reuters. ...Researchers ... found vacation photos were the biggest cause of resentment with more than half of envy incidents triggered by holiday snaps on Facebook. Social interaction was the second most common cause of envy as users could compare how many birthday greetings they received to those of their Facebook friends and how many "likes" or comments were made on photos and postings. 'Passive following triggers invidious emotions, with users mainly envying happiness of others, the way others spend their vacations and socialize,' the researchers said in the report 'Envy on Facebook: A Hidden Threat to Users' Life Satisfaction?' released on Tuesday. ... They found people aged in their mid-30s were most likely to envy family happiness while women were more likely to envy physical attractiveness. ...Men were shown to post more self-promotional content on Facebook to let people know about their accomplishments while women stressed their good looks and social lives. ... 'From a provider's perspective, our findings signal that users frequently perceive Facebook as a stressful environment, which may, in the long-run, endanger platform sustainability,' the researchers concluded.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/22/us-facebook-envy-idUSBRE90L0N220130122>

- This is probably as good of a place as any to bring today's sermon to a close, and to do that I'll pose a question that I ask of myself as well.
- Here it is; could the source of the stress and dissatisfaction in my Christian life be that I don't believe I can have that which Paul lists here?
- Same question, but in a different way, would my life be satisfying if I were a blessing in persecution, and I rejoiced with those who rejoice?